

Dramatically Increase The Credibility Of Your Affiliate Website With Customer Reviews

Affiliate marketing was a six billion dollar business in 2006, and shows no sign of tapering off any time soon. But as good as business has been for the top affiliate marketers, it could be a lot better for the majority. A real obstacle to achieving the sales goals of many affiliates involves their credibility. If I say a product is great, and I am being paid to convince you to buy it, why should you believe me?

The fact is, most affiliate sites on the web today are poorly constructed, and this beggars any authority the owner of the site hopes to convert into sales. Often these sites are thin conduits designed to ferry traffic from search engines to the sites of merchants who have neither the resources nor the time to figure out how to find the customers they need to ensure their business success. Despite this, and because the web is growing more and more congested, the value of a *quality* affiliate marketer nonetheless continues to increase. Unfortunately this simple fact is not at all recognized by the buying public who often begrudge affiliate marketers and view them as interlopers who put themselves between the customer and the merchants they are searching for. In short, the affiliate marketer has long suffered, and continues to suffer, from an image problem.

This image problem is not confined just to the public. Google, which derives huge advertising revenues from affiliate marketers, nevertheless regards affiliate marketing sites with complete disdain. Of course, affiliate marketers themselves have contributed to this problem because their websites very often contain little in the way of new or unique content, which is what Google values and believes its customers (web searchers) value. It is no surprise therefore, to find that some of the top affiliate marketers differentiate themselves from the rest of the pack in precisely this area. They offer not only critical assessment of the products they promote, but also take the time to blog and build a comradie with the visitors to their sites. By offering unique, and regularly updated content, they appease the Gods of Google, and are rewarded with organic (non pay-per-click) traffic that very much contributes to the bottom line. In other words, the top affiliate marketers know how to project a good image--to their visitors, to Google, and to other search engines that might bring in prospects.

Blogging is a great way to produce unique content. But it is time consuming, there is a limit to how much daily content you can produce as an affiliate, and not everyone finds the task of writing content easy work. What if instead you could have the content create itself automatically? Well, actually you can. If you offer customer reviews of the products you promote you accomplish this and more. Not only is the subject matter on target, but the reviews themselves promote the products for you (supposing you have carefully chosen only the best products to promote, which is what any *good* affiliate marketer knows to do). Even better, you no longer have to worry about that credibility problem. If ten people come onto your site and say "Buy product XYZ, it rocks!" that recommendation is a heck of a lot more convincing than anything that you might say, no matter how truthful your utterances.

So, all you have to do as an affiliate marketer, to get people to "click through" to a merchant site in a buying mood is to promote good products and let people express their opinions about those products on your site. If the products are great, the reviews will reflect that. If instead it turns out that the reviews are consistently bad for one of the products you promote, then drop it! Replace it with another.

"But collecting reviews is really difficult!" I hear you object. "I simply do not have time for that. Do I?"

There is nothing inherently difficult about putting customer reviews on your site today. It does take a little time to set things up, but low-cost commercial quality reviewing applications are available to do the bulk of the work (see the one mentioned in the resource box below if you want to get a jump start on implementing customer reviews on your website). Not only does a customer review section on your site substantially increase your overall credibility, but search engines will love the content--especially if the review pages have been optimized for the search engines (as all good reviewing engines will certainly do).

There is another benefit to collecting customer reviews. Some review engines allow you to publish the reviews as RSS feeds. What this means is increased traffic. You can submit your feeds to the RSS directories. Moreover, if the reviewing application also allows you to create RSS feeds compatible with Google Base (as does the application mentioned below) you can upload your entire review database (or the first N characters of each review) to Google Base and make your reviews accessible to the various Google marketing avenues.

Given the clear benefits to implementing customer reviews on affiliate marketing sites it is surprising that so very few marketers have actually adopted this strategy to date. But as the web continues to mature, and affiliate marketing grows more professional, it is to be expected that this strategy will become more and more common on the sites of top affiliate marketers.

About the Author

Stephen Carter is the developer of [Red Queen, powerful customer review software](#) that allows webmasters to take advantage of the preselling potential of customer reviews. To learn more, see: [How To Put Customer Reviews On Your Affiliate Website](#).

